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**Testimony of Jon Clemens, Policy Specialist at Connecticut Association of Nonprofits,
Related to**

**H.B. No. 6225 - AN ACT REQUIRING A RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARD ON
OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN**

&

S.B. No. 846 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL CREDITS.

Representative Urban, Senator Musto, Representative Fawcett, distinguished members of the Select Committee on Children, thank you for your time and attention to the issues before you today. My name is Jon Clemens and I am a Policy Specialist at the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, the largest trade organization in the state dedicated exclusively to nonprofits. We are a collaborative of more than 500 member organizations, with a Children's Sector representing more than 140 organizations providing child and youth-related services across the full continuum of care.

The first bill that I would like to speak about today is House Bill No. 6225 - AN ACT REQUIRING A RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CARD ON OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN. Right now more than 350 children from Connecticut are receiving services in out-of-state placements. Kids in distant programs are far less likely to have family-related treatment, they often are only visited once a month by a DCF worker, and they are uprooted from their communities. Moreover, these programs do not receive the same scrutiny of their services as they relate to restraints, seclusions, AWOLs, and arrests.

That said, I applaud the Committee's intention behind this bill; ensuring the safety and well-being of kids in out-of-state placement is of paramount importance, and holding out-of-state providers to a higher level of scrutiny will go a ways towards ensuring that well-being. However, in this time of economic turmoil, when dollars are few and people's energies are stretched, I ask that we not lose sight on the true solution to this problem: keeping Connecticut kids close to home.

It is generally in the best interest for children to receive treatment and care close to home. When our youth are served in-state they are better able to maintain their existing relationships, and when transitioning into a lower level of care they benefit from established connections that Connecticut providers have with one another; these linkages aid in supporting stability and success. It is virtually impossible to achieve the goal of reunification when the youth is not in close proximity to their family/community; reintegration work should be viewed and pursued as an essential part of successful treatment.

Connecticut's kids are being sent for services out of state for several reasons: sometimes Connecticut's capacity for the needed level of care is full, sometimes it is cheaper to attain services in another state, but usually kids are sent out of state because the services needed are of a "specialized" nature and are not available in-state. We need to better invest in the adaptation, evolution, and development of services in Connecticut; we need to stop sending our money to other states; we need to support our state economy by maintaining and creating jobs here.

Connecticut is currently spending tens of millions of dollars on treatment, education, and related travel & lodging expenses to send kids out of state for services. Meanwhile, in-state providers have a desire to serve Connecticut's kids; they are willing to expand their services but have repeatedly been stymied by the state's refusal to supply start-up funding or even a commitment to utilize the adapted programs' services. Investment in the re-specialization efforts of providers, along with a proper service needs projection will result in ending the undesirable stalemate of youth continuing to be sent out of state while programs within Connecticut are closing.

Next, I would like to discuss my support for Senate Bill No. 846 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRANSFER OF EDUCATIONAL CREDITS. This is really simply a matter of getting credit where credit is due. Currently, kids who return to a community school system after having attended school in the DCF-operated Unified School District #2 often do not receive credit for their educational efforts. This is unfair, and undermines the progress made by the student. Senate Bill No. 846 would rectify this wrong.

In closing I thank you for your attention to these matters. I invite you to feel free to contact me if I can be of help in answering any questions, or in bringing together a group of providers with whom you could have a dialogue. Thank you.

Jon Clemens
Policy Specialist
Connecticut Association of Nonprofits
90 Brainard Road, Suite 201
Hartford, CT 06114
(860) 525-5080, Ext. 26
JClemens@ctnonprofits.org